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## CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Editor of the National Gazette, Philadelphia.*

### NO. II.

SIR,—In brief pursuance of my promise, I proceed to offer for the consideration of Mr. Walsh and his Correspondent, who, I have no doubt, are too prudent to touch any of them, a collection of texts exemplifying the MORAL CHARACTER of the God of the Christians, and of his favourites. Mr. Walsh and his friend know too well that they are perfectly safe in their stupid and hypocritical abuse of what they are pleased to call Infidelity; but they will not burn their fingers by meddling with a controversy too hot for their handling. They dare not deny the detestable but conclusive character of the texts I am about to refer to; friends as they are to popular deception, they are foes to serious argument. If this be not the case, here is the challenge. Let them accept it if they dare; or any clerical friend for them. If they dislike the epithets I apply to hypocrisy and deception, let them show if they can, that these epithets are not justified by the citations. I am ready to join issue with them, before the public, and appeal "to the Law and to the Testimony."

I undertake to prove from the Bible, that the God of the Jews, adopted and enthroned as the God of the Christians, is a being, unjust, and cruel beyond all records of human cruelty elsewhere to be found, vindictive, wavering, not knowing his own mind, deceitful, jealous, unforgiving, and eternally punishing the innocent for the crimes of the guilty. A being of passions most detestable and truly diabolical. And that his great and acknowledged agents and favourites have been the most execrable villains known in the records of human history.

To begin from the beginning. When he placed Adam and Eve in Paradise, he either knew they would eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, or he did not know it. If he did not, what becomes of his omniscience? If he did, was it not an act of wanton cruelty to tempt them deliberately to their destruction?

On account of the wickedness of the human race, he brought the Deluge on the earth. Was their no milder method of reforming mankind, than that of exterminating them. *Et ubi desertum faciunt*, (says the Goth, speaking of the Romans) *pacem appellant*.

When God ordained the existence of the human race, their minds, their bodies, their faculties, their propensities, their dispositions, were derived from him: he framed and fashioned the human race after his

own liking, and with such characters and tendencies as he chose. Why did he not give them better dispositions? It rested with himself. Why punish them for the necessary results of his own management and ordination? He might have made them angels; why did he choose to make them devils, and then wonder and complain that they were so? Did he take any pains to instruct them better? to reform them? No: he knew the career of wickedness to which he had destined them; he let them run it without any kind of interference on his part, and then exterminated the whole race, for actions due to himself and the disposition, he had implanted!

But suppose for a moment that the men deserved punishment, why kill the poor ignorant women and children? what had they done? Why drown the sheep, the oxen, the beasts, the birds the insects? what had they done? *Quid meruistis oves, placidum pecus, inque tegendos nati homines? Quid meruere Boves?* Tell me, Mr. Walsh, where can you find, out of this book, any thing more diabolical than this savage, indiscriminate cruelty that overwhelmed, with cool deliberation, in one vast and universal destruction, the innocent and the guilty? Can this be considered as answering the great end of all punishment, reformation? This is what your worthy correspondent, I suppose, will call Gospel morality: Divine justice: wholesome example! No wonder the priesthood are cruel by profession. What a pity it is you are not a priest! Not even an abbe, or an ex-jesuit! Come out boldly: lay aside your rancorous and skulking paragraphs, and defend this deluge if you dare. Who has yet replied to Voltaire's poem on the earthquake at Lisbon? You may perhaps term all this ungentlemanly abuse. Cease then your sneers at infidelity, your pious denunciations of heterodoxy, your wish for Pain's works to be consigned to the flames. Had you not better *reply* to them first?

Before that sentence is decreed 'em,  
Do read 'em, Mr. Boreum, read 'em.

Shew us your patent right for exclusive abuse and scurrility, in which you and the orthodox are so delighted to deal: else do not complain of the maxim, *par pari referto*; or that we sometimes condescend to take the advice of that wise man of 300 wives and 700 concubines, and answer a fool according to his folly. If you have any thing like argument, out with it, let us have it, and we will then deal in argument alone.

The precept of Moses, and of the Lord, (who gave the Israelites favour in the sight of the Egyptians) to *borrow* valuable articles from the Egyptians with the intent to rob them; with the design of fraudulently plundering; this breach of honour and honesty, sanctioned by God himself, who interfered to promote and render it successful, may be found, Exod. xii. 35, 36.

The Israelites were commanded by God, through Moses, to invade the lands of nations who never injured them, and against whom they had no quarrel. Of the cities far off, they were ordered to put to death merely the male inhabitants, sparing none but the women and children: but of the nations who were nearest them, and the first in order of in-

vasion, "thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." Deut. xx. 16. What these nations had done to deserve this is no where told. See particularly Deut. vii. 2.

The following precept of persecution has nothing that I know of equal to it in thorough going deliberate cruelty, even in the worst annals of the holy inquisition. It is perhaps the most diabolical command ever given or uttered within the records of history. Deut. xii. 6. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy own son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend who is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods, thou shalt not hearken to him, nor shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare or conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death." "And if thou shalt hear say, in one of thy cities, that certain men of Belial are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants to observe other Gods, then if it be so, thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein and the cattle thereof: \* \* \* that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger and have mercy on thee." Ib. 15, 17. In what kind of language can the Devil be described comparable to this most vindictive cruelty. Is this a God to be loved? If the rebel angels sought to dethrone such a monster, who can blame them, or avoid regretting their failure?

Whether a child is circumcised or not depends on his parents, or on his master if he is a servant; but every uncircumcised man child is ordered by the Lord to be cut off. Gen. xvii. 14.

As it is said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, saith the Lord." There can be no reason for this predelection, but the fraud and lying of the cunning and cowardly Jacob, and the gentlemanly forgiving disposition of Esau.

Exod. xii. gives an account of the Lord destroying the first-born throughout the whole land of Egypt: what crime had these infants committed?

Read the chapter of murders at the Lord's command. Josh. x.

Read the punishment of Israel generally on account of Achan's concealing a few goods. Josh. vii. A flagrant case of punishment inflicted on the innocent.

The slaughter of the other tribes by Benjamin, for no earthly purpose or reason that appears, all by direction and management of the Lord. Josh. xx.

The treacherous assassination of Eglon at the command of God. Judges iii. 15.

The command of Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, to destroy Amalek, man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. I Sam. xv.

The command of treachery delivered from the Lord by Samuel, on account of Saul's sparing Agag. I Sam. xvi.

The whole history of the man after God's own heart, the favourite of the priests, the pious David: the most detestable of the characters commemorated in history. A captain of banditti, a rebel, a traitor, a

whoremonger, an adulterer, a lascivious assassin, recommending vindictive treachery and murder with his dying breath !

The vindictive cruelties of the pious prayer in Ps. cix. cxxxvii.

Elisha cursed some little children in the name of the Lord, who gratified him by the murder of forty-two of them, who, in their childish sport, called Elijah, bald pate. No doubt a crime deserving death in the opinion of the clergy.

The three years famine, on account of the Lord's anger against Saul and his family, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Starving the people, who were innocent, because Saul had offended him. *Quid delirant reges, plectantur achivi.*

The same principle of unjust cruelty in destroying 70,000 of the people, because David, at the instigation of the Lord himself, had numbered them. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. To be sure, in 1 Chron. xxi. 1. it is said that it was not the Lord but Satan that incited David to number the people. I would not give a cent to choose between the Lord and Satan in this case. The crime is in destroying 70,000 innocent persons for one guilty man, who underwent no punishment.

In 2 Chron. xviii. 21. The Lord sent a lying spirit into the mouth of his prophets, that they might prophecy falsely. A deception quite in character and not to be wondered at.

So much for cruelty, falsehood, treachery, robbery, and plunder, by fraudulent management, and by open violence, not merely sanctioned, but ordered, prescribed by this God of Israel and of the Orthodox.

Let us now examine the attributes of this deity, the description given of him in the Christian Scriptures ; but it may be not too late to close the preceding character of iniquity and abominable cruelty, by referring generally to the angry denunciations throughout the whole of the prophecies. It is utterly impossible the Jews should have been a humane and civilized people, when the God whom they worshipped is always represented as a fickle, a jealous, a cruel, an unjust, and furious revengeful tyrant. That any Christian minister can seriously believe a being, so described and characterized, should be a proper object of veneration, of adoration, of reverence, of imitation, is utterly impossible in the nature of things. Attributes so horrible and unlovely, make human nature itself revolt : the feelings are, not respect, but hatred and fear. What then are we to think of these salaried, these hired and paid priests, who live by what in common language would be called by a word too gross for these pages : but in the sacred slang of the order it goes by another name. Such is the truly satanic being to whom they address their adorations and supplications.

#### *Of the Old Testament Attributes of the Deity.*

For I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God ; visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of them that hate me. Deut. xx. 25. And for mercy's sake who could love him ?

He that sacrificeth to any other God, save unto the lord only, he shall surely be destroyed. Deut. xxii. 20.

And my wrath shall wax hot [this is the Lord who speaks] and I will



kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. Ib. 24.

Thou shalt not revile the *Gods* : nor curse the ruler of thy people. Ib. 28.

Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and thy liquors ; the first born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Ib. 29.

See the whole of the next chapter for a recognition of the existence of other gods, beside the God of Israel. What is meant by giving him the first-born I shall consider by and by.

God is frequently said, both in the Old and New Testament, not only to swear, but to swear in *wrath*. Deut. i. 34. Ps. xcv. 2. Heb. iii. 11. Nahum i. 2, &c.

God himself says, " My fury shall come up in my face, for in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken." Ezek. xxxviii. 18, 19, and the whole of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Do these accounts give any aid in the repression of bad passions ?

I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they could not live. Ezek. xx. 25, 21.

And it repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart. Gen. vi. 6. See also the whole of chap. xiv. of Jeremiah.

God is always spoken of in the Old Testament as if he were a human being. He is said to have rested and to have been refreshed. Ex. xxxi. 17. Wine that cheereth God and man. Judges. ix. 13. He is said to hiss for a fly and a bee. Is. v. 56. Is. xvii. 18. Zach. x. 8.

God spake to Moses face to face as a man talketh with his friend. Ex. xxxiii. 2. Nay, even some of the nobles of Israel saw him. Ex. xxiv. 10, 11. Yet in the same chapter where Moses is said to have talked with him so familiarly, God declares that Moses shall only see his hinder parts, for that no man can see his face and live. Ex. xxxiii. 20, 23.

Satan is represented, in Job, making a contract with God Almighty about persecuting Job.

In Genesis God is represented as being in dread of the efforts of mankind in building the tower of Babel. " Go to, let us go down and confound their language. Gen. xi. 4, 6, 7. The Chaldean phraseology about God is always plural. So let us make man after our likeness. Gen. i. 26. To whom did he address himself ? Is not this gross Anthropomyrphitism ?

What are we to say to his directions to his prophets, to Isaiah, Ezekiel, &c. making them act like filthy beasts, like madmen and idiots : and causing them to speak in language so dirty, so obscene, so gross beyond all example, as to amount to an absolute prohibition against reading the passages to another, or permitting a female to peruse them at all ?

As to human sacrifices, and the dedication of the first-born to the Lord, I have not opportunity now to enter into that disputation further than that I conclude it from a consideration and comparison of Numb. iii. 11, 12, 14, 41. Levit. xxvii. Deut xxxii. 42. vii. 2. xxii. 29.

So much for the moral precepts and moral practices of the God of the Old Testament. I will not dwell on the moral precepts and prac-

tices of those pious personages his favourites, the patriarchs and prophets ; it would lead me too far. Those who read their bible with attention will have a tolerable just idea of them. Let Mr. Walsh and his parson find me, if they can, more reprehensible characters than Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, &c.

My next communication will relate to the morality of the Jews and the New Testament, which will furnish us with abundant materials for Mr Walsh to reply to.

TRUTH.

MR. EDITOR.—The following observations (with the exception of those in the preface, which have been written since) were not drawn up with a view to publication, but at the solicitation of two or three acquaintances, I send them to you to occupy a place in the "Correspondent," should you deem them worthy of insertion.

JULIAN.

*A few plain Observations on the Mosaic account of the Creation, and the Fall of Man.*

The Creation and the Fall of Man are the two first subjects in the Old Testament. On them, especially on the latter, the Jewish and Christian Systems are built—in the belief of which, we are told, are involved our eternal happiness or misery.\* This is sufficient to induce me to give the subject a consideration ; and taking the admonition of an inspired writer, to "try all things, prove all things, hold fast that which is good," I thought it my duty to examine these subjects with freedom and impartiality. I have done so, and, as I think, found them destitute of truth and consistency. I have noted down my observations in as clear and argumentative language as I possibly could, founded on the texts that are given.

A desire to serve the cause of truth, lessen the effects of religious bigotry, and anxious to contribute my mite to the general stock of information, have been my only motives for giving to the public the following imperfect view of the Creation and the Fall of Man. Had I sufficient health and leisure, I would treat in the same way the Deluge, the Plagues of Egypt, the Theocracy of the Jews, the Birth, Mission, Miracles, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus ; and offer a few remarks on the question, Has Christianity been of utility to man, and is it adapted to promote his happiness ?

Gen. i. 3. "God said let there be light, and there was light." The writer would lead us to believe that God was in company with one or more beings ; but of what nature and character we are left to conjecture. Whether he was talking to another person, as one partner in business talks to another ; or whether he was giving command, as a man commands his workmen, would no doubt create a difference of opinion, as the text will bear both constructions. Certain it is, that if God was talking, it must have been to some person or persons ; but who

\* If the Fall of Man had not taken place, there would have been no sin, no Redeemer, and, consequently, none of that faith which wafts man to the mansions of eternal bliss, and the want of which plunges him into eternal misery. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

they were, what they were like, and where they resided, unbelievers must never know. If God had merely to say, "let there be light," that is, if he had only to *speak* in order to have a thing *done*, I cannot see why it should take him *six days* to make all things when a *moment* would have been sufficient. Then he would not have been fatigued, nor have had to *refresh himself*. If any one ask me why I object to the account given by Moses, and how the world came to exist, I will say that the former is absurd, and contrary to our ideas, and true philosophy; and of the latter, I and every man are entirely ignorant. How matter came to exist? whether it is created or is eternal? I do not know; and in this respect, every person is as ignorant as myself. I know that matter does exist, as much as I know I exist, notwithstanding some learned men have denied its existence. Whether matter was produced by a superior intelligent being, or whether it exists by its own power, I must refer my readers to the writings of Locke, De Cartes, Malbranche, Mirabeau, Voltaire, Hume, Paley, &c. who have examined the subject in all its various bearings; but who, notwithstanding their abilities and information, know no more about it, as I said before, than I do myself. Still their arguments may give satisfaction to some minds; more satisfaction, I believe, than is to be found in the book of Genesis. Indeed, I do not see how it is possible for an intelligent mind, that has examined the subject, to believe in Moses' account of the Creation.

Ver. 7. "The waters which were *above* the firmament." Baily defines the word firmament thus:—"Firmament, the heaven of the fixed stars; or that space which is expanded arched over us in the heavens." What Moses could mean by saying, 'the waters which were *above* the firmament,' I shall not attempt to show. I know that the small particles of water exhaled by the sun, from seas, rivers, &c. rise to a region above the "heaven of the fixed stars."

Ver. 12. "The earth brought forth grass, and herb, yielding seed after his kind. Ver. 13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

Are we to infer from these verses, that the herb brought forth seed, and the tree fruit on the same day they were made? I can draw no other inference from the texts. How was it possible for the earth to bring forth grass, herbs, and fruit, before the sun was made? Can any thing vegetate without heat? If they can, then the whole race of philosophers, ancient and modern, with the exception of Moses, have been greatly in error,—and the sun deprived of an important quality. To say that "God can do all things," is absurd in this case, because he might as well have made the sun at the commencement of his labors, as on the *fourth day*, as it constituted a part of the six days work. This would have shown something like system, which every good mechanic never fails to pursue.

Ver. 16. "God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night."

This is on the fourth day. Moses certainly could not possess much knowledge of astronomy, or he would have known, with our common mechanics, that the sun is the source of life, light and heat. It is the light of the sun that makes day, as his absence does night;



yet Moses says, God made three days before the sun was made! He does admit that the greater light was made to rule the day; that is, to control, to preside over, to govern; but he does not say that the light of the sun produces day. As respects the moon, how can she rule the night, when she is in conjunction with the sun, and even the light which she gives, is borrowed from the sun. Perhaps Moses, who, no doubt, like the people of the eastern nations, was well versed in astrology, believed that the sun and moon governed day and night in an astrological sense. The same reason has been assigned for making the sun and moon; but not so with the stars. Moses laconically and simply enough observes, "he made the stars also!" This was enough to give satisfaction—to the Jews.

We are led to infer from the bible, that every thing God did, was in favor of this little planet on which we reside; that he made the solar system, the infinite system of the fixed stars, and sent his own son to be murdered by, and for the salvation of the little human beings, which he placed upon this earth; and though it is only 7,970 miles in diameter, (according to the Rev. J. Goldsmith,) while Herschell is 35,000, Saturn 77,950, Jupiter 94,100, and the Sun 870,000 miles in diameter; yet all these large bodies, and the infinite variety of worlds, were made for this little globe, the inhabitants of which have always (with a little exception, previous to the fall,) been miserable, sinful and rebellious!

A question here arises; are Saturn, Jupiter, the Sun and the lesser planets, *inhabited*? It is the opinion of the most profound Astronomers that they are; but Moses, Jesus, (the Son of God and who *knew all things*,) and the rest of the Jewish prophets, have not told us, nor did they know any thing about it. If they are inhabited, have not the inhabitants been subject to the same temptations as Adam and Eve were? If they have, and resisted these temptations, they must be more virtuous and better organized than we are; and this consequently subjects God to partiality? If those inhabitants are subject to sin and misery, and if the son of God was sent from heaven to redeem the inhabitants of this earth, will not *each* of these bodies require a redeemer, a son of God? If this is the case, God must have many sons, or that son must be murdered as *many times*, as there are worlds that are inhabited? If our priests can get over this knotty subject, they will have to use "a multitude of words to darken counsel;" in other words, they will have to use a great deal of sophistry.

Ver. 17. "God *set* them (the Sun and Moon) in the firmament." This is something in the same way that an astronomer sets his figures of the sun, and stars in an orrery. Where they were made, and where they lay previous to their being "*set*" in the firmament, Moses does not inform us.

Ver. 26. "God made man in his *own* image." If we take this literally, it is that God has arms, hands, legs, mouth, nose, lips, &c.; that he is composed of flesh, blood, bones, &c.; that he has the senses of seeing, hearing, &c., and that he has the faculties of imagination, memory, judgment, understanding, &c. But the Christian world, though it likens God somewhat to the physical form of a man, believes that man was made *morally* "in the image of God;" that is, that as God is perfect,



man was made perfect also. If man was made perfect, like God, how could he become imperfect, unless we are to suppose that God can become imperfect also, which is contrary to all the ideas we have of the nature of God? Again,—if Adam was made perfect, how could he be weak, and subject to sin and misery? If he was not perfect, how could he be made “in the image of God?” These questions cannot, I believe, be easily solved. In what sense Adam was made in the image of God, I cannot form an idea. But have not Christians represented God, as composed, not of the same, but of infinitely *worse* materials than those of which they themselves are composed?

Ver. 31. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was *very good*.” If God made every thing “very good,” how came evil to exist? Can that be good which contains within itself the seeds of evil and dissolution? Have not wars, civil and political, existed from time immemorial? Have not religious wars existed with desolating fury, in one country or another, ever since the establishment of the Jewish and Christian systems? What is the contest at present between the Turks and the Greeks? Have not the latter been supported by the people of this country, and those of Europe, principally in the name of Christianity? Do not the Turks and Greeks stigmatize each other as “*infidels*?” How came murders, tortures, robberies, &c. to exist, with the innumerable pangs of misery, some of them so violent, as scarcely to be endured, and others that secretly prey upon the mind, and fail not shortly to produce a premature death? How came these, and all the various disorders, both of man and beast, into existence if all was made *very good*; and that too by a being who is said to possess omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and wisdom, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.” Surely the writer of Genesis never could believe, that man would ever arrive at even a moderate degree of intellectual knowledge or he never would have put forth such a wretched production as the book of Genesis, though it is on a par with the rest of the books contained in the bible.

Chap. 2, Ver. 2. “And on the *seventh* day God ended his work.” I notice this, because I have never seen it noticed in any sermon, lecture, &c. and I believe that nine tenths of the Christian world are not aware of the fact, that the writer of Genesis says, that God ended his work, not on the sixth, but on the *seventh* day. From the supposed circumstance of God completing his labors in six days, the Jews were commanded to rest and to worship their God on the seventh day. Christians, always hating the Jews because they crucified Jesus, and rejected his doctrines, adopted Sunday, the *first* day of the week, as their day of rest and worship, without law, precedent or reason, except the mere circumstance of Jesus’ rising from the dead on the first day of the week. If it is deemed necessary to observe Sunday, in commemoration of the supposed resurrection of Jesus on that day, ought not Christians in all parts of the world to commence their worship at one and the same time Jesus is said to have risen from the dead. But here a difficulty arises; for if Jesus rose at six o’clock on the Sunday morning, it would, at, and near the antipodes to Jerusalem, be twelve hours later, or six o’clock in the evening; consequently the Christians of the latter place would

be pursuing their avocations, twelve hours *after* the Christians of Jerusalem had ended theirs for their sabbath, or day of rest and devotion.

Ver. 2. "And he *rested* on the seventh day from all the work which he had made." What an inconsistent and weak idea this writer must have had of that Being who made all things, of which this earth appears but an atom, although it is about twentp-five thousand miles in circumference. He makes God all powerful, and yet so weak, so fatigued, that he is under the necessity to rest and refresh himself. See Ex. 31, 17. That man must have an abundance of superstition who believes that the God of the Jews is the Supreme Being of the universe. Such is not my belief, and this will account for the strictures and the levity with which I have treated those passages, which represent the Jewish God as the Author of all things.

To be Concluded in our next.

JULIAN.

Philadelphia, June 1828.

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**NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 1828.**

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**BLASPHEMY.**

We copy the following from a Report of the Commissioners, appointed by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, on the Penal Code :—

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in general assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That if any person shall wilfully premeditatedly, and despitefully blaspheme or speak loosely or profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures of truth, such person, on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to pay a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars, or undergo an imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months.

We were impressed with the idea that the law, once existing in Pennsylvania, respecting what is called blasphemy, had been long since repealed by the Legislature of that state. But it seems we were mistaken, and that so far from the advancement of liberal principles keeping pace with the progress of Science, in a community which boasts so much of its literary institutions, bigotry and intolerance appear to exercise a paramount sway. This, at least, is the opinion we are led to form on supposing that the measure recommended in the above report, will receive the approbation of the Pennsylvania Legislature. But as we are persuaded that the intolerant law has originated with those men who vainly attempted the establishment, by legislative sanction, of the Sunday School Union, we anticipate its sharing a similar fate.

We should like to hear the definition which these mistaken men give of the word blasphemy, as applicable to God, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, or to the Bible? According to our conceptions, to blaspheme any one, signifies to do some injury to their character—to bring them into discredit among their equals. Now, how is it possible to injure the character of deity, who has no equals? Or how can any thing we may *say* of him be blasphemous, when there is no evidence of any relation, or connection existing between this deity and man, by which the acts of the latter could be considered either agreeable or disagreeable to the former. It is easy to understand how one man may injure the character or person

of another man. But no such contact or intercourse exists between deity and man, as between man and man. It is therefore, a mere bugbear of the priesthood to talk of blaspheming *God*. It is *themselves* they mean. Exposing their deceptions affects their *interest*, and makes them tremble for their salaries and luxuriant fare. Hence the cry of infidel, blasphemer, atheist; which, notwithstanding its frequent repetition is now heard with little apprehension; and when applied to antichristian principles, will always be found indicative of mental improvement, and productive of real benefit to the human race.

As to what is called blasphemy against the "holy scriptures," it is a prostitution of the term to use it in that sense; for if ever there was a book in existence that deserved the name of blasphemous, that book is the bible. It is a libel upon its supposed author. It is a libel on human nature. It is a libel on true morality. It is a libel on every thing held descent among men. How then can a book be injured which is itself so fraught with injury to all who confide in its contents?

But supposing the bible to be as pure as we assert it to be impure—supposing that it furnished no examples of bloody wars—of horrid massacres—of robberies—of adulteries—or of crimes committed by order of the priesthood, in the name of deity; these *negative* qualities would be far from placing it beyond criticism, or authorize the denunciation of blasphemy against those who should candidly investigate its contents.

"But," say our opponents, "you are not only blasphemers of the *Old Testament* books, but you actually have the audacity to deny the authenticity of the *New Testament*; and, horrible to relate, you more than insinuate your doubts as to the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah who appeared upon this earth about 1800 years ago."

If it be really *true* that such a personage as Jesus of Nazareth once existed, and that the account given of him in the gospels is a faithful narrative, it would certainly be *presumptuous* in any one to deny this. But why such a denial should be called *blasphemy*, appears extremely absurd; because the mere fact of *refusing to acknowledge* the truth of a statement, a narrative, or a history, can have no effect on that statement—cannot in any way detract from, or injure it, if it is based on incontrovertible principles, or supported by indisputable testimony. To withhold credit in such circumstances, might indicate ignorance or indifference, but it could not implicate the incredulous in a charge of impiety, far less of blasphemy. Now, the latest enquiries on the subject have led to the opinion, that the words *Jesus Christ* do not express a *person*, but a *principle*. That the *person*, in fact, has *not* existed.

"This conclusion," observes a late writer, "is drawn, not only from the general defects of the christian system of religion, when contrasted with its pretensions, as found among all sects; but on the absence of all historical proof. No writer, in the century in which the person is said to have lived, is known to have mentioned such a character. No record, of any date, has come from the country in which the person is said to have lived, mentioning such a person. The admitted forgeries of the second and third centuries, relating to such a person, are evidences that there was no authenticated history of him at any period, and that all mention of such a person was fraudulent in its origin. The des-



olation of Judea, in the first century and before the name of Jesus is known to have existed, warrants the *forgery* of the mention of such a character having existed in Judea. When the name of the person was first introduced, there was no agreement about it : there has never been any general agreement about it ; and the evidence lessens wherever enquiry extends. The defenders of the personal existence of Jesus refer to the books of the New Testament, as having been written in the first century. Lardner and others have given dates to them in the first century ; but all those dates have no other authority than supposition. "*Supposing* such a person to have existed, such cotemporaries must have written *about* such a time." This is the whole of their authority. But the facts of the case weigh against them ; for their is no mention of the existence of any such books until *late* in the *second* century, Had any writer mentioned the existence of the books in the *first* century, they would have formed a different kind of evidence ; though they might not have proved all that is said about the person of Jesus. Not having been known in the *first* century, and only having been known in the latter part of the *second* century, as part of a multitude of contradictory writings about the person of Jesus, it follows, that these books, rather than a proof of the existence of such a person, are collateral proofs against it."

With what justice, then, can any one be accused of blasphemy, and profanity ; or even the *correctness* of their principles be disputed, when they refuse to adopt, or call in question a religion founded on such defective evidence ?

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*The Exploder.*—Our readers will recollect that our correspondent, I. S. S. of Buffalo, in his communication which appeared in No. 14, of the present volume, announced his intention of publishing a series of articles on the Bible, Missionary, Tract, Pious Youth, and other similar societies, instituted for the purpose of extorting money from the public. The first of these articles has just reached us ; and as we consider its circulation calculated to promote the cause of truth, and its perusal to gratify our readers, we have commenced its republication in our present number.

#### TO THINKING MEN.

"He who will not reason, is a bigot ; he who cannot is a fool ; and he who dares not is a slave."

"The delicacy which shrinks from detecting hypocrisy, in whatever garb, whether of charity or religion, is treason to mankind."

A correspondent of the Rochester Observer, of the 29th of February, under the signature of "Visitor," in speaking of a meeting held in Buffalo, relative to the observance of the Sabbath, says—"When the people came together to consult, Satan came also among them," as in the days of Job. He reported that he had been "walking up and down on the earth on *Sunday*, and seen much evil, and advised all men to work, as *virtue* could only be sustained by industry."

I always associate the idea of disingenuousness with meanness and vulgarity, and he who resorts to such a course will ever prove a bad



advocate. I was present at the meeting alluded to, and well know the person to whom "Visitor" has, in so courteous a manner, applied the epithet "Satan," Had "Visitor" related the whole truth, and fairly stated the remarks of "Satan," I would have thanked him cordially, and remained silent. "Satan" confined his remarks to the question, "Is the order and virtue of society promoted by *compelling* men to be *idle* one day in seven?"—He assumed the negative to be true, and premised his remarks by adopting as axioms, that "Idleness is the mother of vice," "Virtue and Happiness" synonymous terms, and so of "vice and misery;" that it is a decree of nature universally applicable, "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," and that whoever violates that universal decree, shall be unhappy in the precise ratio of its violation.

It is a maxim that the "labours of the body relieve the pains of the mind." Happiness and unhappiness are terms which relate only to the mind; it is quite immaterial whether we attain the happiness by the labors of the mind, or those of the body. The indutrious man is almost ever a virtuous and contented one. The laboring man and the literary one are equally happy; the effect on both is produced by the same means, EMPLOYMENT. For the truth of these positions, he appealed to the experience of every one. He then came to the application of those remarks to the project of preventing boats on the canals, and carriages on the roads, from running on Sundays; whereby people of uncultivated mind would be *compelled* to be idle, and consequently vicious. "Satan" did not, at that meeting take the broad ground which I now do, that all the drunkenness, gambling, theft, debauchery, and every crime which disgraces our nature, is attributed to idleness, principally on what is called the Lord's day; that the observance of that day is fraught with more ills to mankind than all the other causes of evil combined. These conclusions were formed from the observations "Satan" made while "up and down on the earth on Sunday." He stated explicitly to the meeting, that the dram shops, taverns, and places of idle resort were more particularly filled on that day than on any other of the week. The young apprentices, journeymen mechanics, and common laborers, assemble; and, to use the language of "Paley," having no employment, they consume their time in rude, if not criminal pastime, in stupid sloth, or brutish intemperance."

The exertions which "Visitor" and others are making to enforce the idle observance of the Sabbath, naturally has led us to enquire into the propriety as well as the duty of such observance. They, "Visitor" and others, take it for granted, that it is by the express command of God. I ask, why the Mahomedans are to observe Friday, the Jews, Saturday, and the Christians Sunday; and why most of the nations have no command at all on the subject? I undertake to answer, that in Nature there is nothing to enjoin such an observance, nor from which to infer an obligation to do it. A portion of mankind believe that Jesus of Nazareth was sent of God to promote their welfare, both spiritual and temporal. Jesus must have known all that was important for man to do, or else he was not God. If the Sabbath was necessary, why did not he or his disciples enjoin its observance? He did not,—but, on the contrary, he was notoriously a *Sabbath breaker*. No such observance was attended

to until the fourth century, and subsequent to the council of Nice, that grandest combination of fraud and *priestcraft* ever known amongst men. The following quotations from "Dr. Paley" may have some weight as authority. "The celebration of divine service never occupied the whole day. What remains, therefore, of Sunday, must be considered as a mere rest from the ordinary occupations of civil life. If the command by which the Sabbath was instituted, be binding upon christians, it must be binding as to the day, the duties, and the penalty; in none of which it is received. The observance of the Sabbath, was not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles. The practice of holding religious assemblies on the first day of the week, *may* have originated from some precept of Christ or his apostles, though *none such* be now extant." "A cessation upon that day from labor, beyond the time of attendance upon public worship, is *not intimated* in any passage of the New Testament; nor did Christ or his apostles deliver, that we know of, any command to their disciples, for a discontinuance, upon that day, of the common affairs of their professions. The *resting* on that day from our employments, longer than we are detained from them by attendance upon these assemblies, is, to christians, an ordinance of human institution."

The Christian religion suffers no man to "judge another in respect to the Sabbath day, or of any holy days."—*Colos. ii 16.*

It asserts the right "to esteem all days alike."—*Romans xvi 5.*

It allows every man "to be persuaded in his own mind in respect to the Sabbath days."

It forbids us to judge one another in such "indifferent matters as ceremonies, meats and days."—*Romans xiv.*

It does not bind men to "weak and beggarly elements, the observance of *days and months, and times and years.*"—*Gal. iv 10.*

In the old and new Testaments, recreations and amusements are no more forbidden on the first day, than any other of the week.—And, I again quote from Dr. Paley where he says of the Sabbath, "if it had been observed to the departure of the Jews out of Egypt, a period of about 2,500 years, it appears unaccountable that no mention of it, no occasion of *even the obscurest allusion* to it, should occur, either in the general history of the world, before the call of Abraham, or, which is more to be wondered at, in that of the lives of the three first Jewish Patriarchs."

I have come to the conclusion, that the *observance of the Sabbath day is a cunningly divided institution, got up by the PRIESTS to compel people to be idle, or else go to church for amusement, and thus contribute to their support.*

To compel men to be idle, is to promote vice. Idleness is incompatible with virtue, therefore, before we deprive a person of one means of employment, it is our duty to provide him another; else we must be responsible for his vices. These remarks apply to one day as well as to another; but as Sunday is the only day in question, then I ask what will you do with the idlers on that day? The answer generally is, "send them to meeting." That answer is given without reflection. The Gospel has absolutely become merchandise, and is sold at such extravagant pri-

ces that the poor cannot afford to purchase it. In consequence of the fashion of the times, a seat in a Church in any of the cities, cost as much as a comfortable dwelling. The poor are compelled to make great sacrifices to gratify pride, and keep up appearances, or else to forego the advantages, if any there be, of going to *meeting*. It is said there are free pews for such as are not able to hire or purchase. It is true, and the man who should occupy one, would receive such contemptuous looks from his pious brethren, that he would as soon have the word *pauper* labelled on his back, as to do it. The *meeting houses* have become a sort of fashionable exchange, instead of places of devotion. Those who are not in the fashion, dislike to appear with those who are and as the poor cannot afford to be fashionable, they are literally sneered out of the reach of the Gospel.—Once make all the seats free, have the rich and poor seated on equal terms, and in a short time you would find the fashionables, who are now making such pretention to piety, seeking other places of amusement: and when they do so, they will carry with them the main support of the *Priests*. What would you have the travelers and boatmen do on Sundays? If one of them should visit even your "Visitor's" *meeting house* in his every day garb, perhaps the best he has, every man among you would find his pride to get the better of his piety; keep his pew door shut and *fastened*, and the boatman would learn, to his extreme mortification, that he had fallen among the proud Pharisees, instead of the humble followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

[To be continued.]

*Another Liberal Paper.*—We have received the prospectus of a new paper, about to appear in the capital of Ohio, to be entitled "*The Cincinnati Free Press*;" and to be edited by R. L. JENNINGS. It is to be published weekly at \$2 per annum, payable in advance. The well known attachment of Mr. Jennings to liberal principles, and the fearless manner in which he has hitherto advocated them, renders it unnecessary for us to say any thing more in the way of recommending his present undertaking, than merely to announce his intentions; and to state that we are authorised to receive subscriptions for the "*Free Press*," from all who are disposed to patronize a publication to be strenuously devoted to the emancipation of the human mind.

Mr. Jennings will in future act as our agent in Cincinnati, in receiving subscriptions for the *Correspondent*.

*Fourth of July.*—The members of the *Free Press Association*, and the friends of liberal principles generally, intend to celebrate the approaching Anniversary of National Independence, by a public dinner, in the New-York Coffee House, No. 10, William, corner of Exchange street.

Tickets, which will admit a lady and gentleman, \$1,25; or a single gentleman, 75 cents each; to be had at the Office of the *Correspondent*, 422 Broadway; or at the Bar of the New-York Coffee House.

*Free Press Tract Fund.*—Although the advocates of liberal principles are opposed to those Bible, Missionary, and Tract Societies, which have been established in this and other countries, the principle on which these Societies proceed cannot but receive their approbation. It, in fact, originated with the friends of civil and religious



liberty in Europe, and would, long ere this, have overthrown political as well as spiritual tyranny, had not measures been adopted to restrain the dissemination of all writings calculated to dispel the mists of ignorance.

A plan so excellent and efficient was not to be lost sight of by the priesthood. They immediately perceived that a system so well adapted to operate on the human mind in favor of liberal principles, might, now that its progress had been arrested by the civil power, be acted upon with advantage in aid of religion. Pious tracts were thus substituted for those of a liberal tendency; and that mighty engine, the press, the value of which can only be appreciated when it is employed in diffusing knowledge, has been prostituted to the base purpose of arresting the progress of science, in order to extend the empire of superstition, and the influence of the priesthood.

The object contemplated by creating this fund, is to counteract the demoralizing effect which the circulation of *religious* tracts must have on the community. By sending forth writings of a nature suited to open the eyes of the world to the deception practised upon them—to give birth to reflection—to lead to a rational train of thinking—it is not doubted but that *one liberal* tract, while it will be read far more extensively, will have a more powerful effect in rendering mankind better and happier, than *ten thousand* of those *religious* productions, with which the country is inundated, and which, there is every reason to believe, are loathed by four fifths of the inhabitants.

With these views, the "FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION" respectfully solicit the co-operation of the friends of Truth throughout the United States, who will be supplied with Tracts at *cost* prices.

Subscribers of \$1, will be entitled to 1000 pages; being ten pages for one cent.

A donation of \$10 will entitle the donator to 500 pages annually, during life. A donation of \$5, to 250 pages annually, during life.

Orders to be addressed to the agent, Mr. GEORGE HOUSTON, *Free Press Tract Depository*, 422, Broadway, New-York.

The following Tracts are now for sale at the Depository.

No. 1. Christian Mysteries.—8 pages.

No. 2. Progress and Effects of Christianity.—4 pages.

\* \* All orders must be post paid, and accompanied by a remittance. Nos. 3 and 4 will be put to press in a few days; and the subsequent numbers as soon after as the receipts will meet the expenses.

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*Free Press Association.*—The meetings of the Association are now held in the *Temple of Science*, (formerly the Bethel Academy) Elizabeth-Street, between Houston and Bleeker-streets. A *Theological* lecture will be delivered on Sunday, (to-morrow) the 29th instant, at 4 o'clock, in the afternoon. The *Scientific* lectures are postponed during the continuance of the warm weather.

*Society of Free Enquirers.*—This society now holds its meetings in the Long Room, No. 163 Chatham-street, where lectures are regularly delivered every Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

N. B.—There is an entrance to the room also in James-street.

The CORRESPONDENT is published at 422 Broadway, by GEO. HOUSTON & Co. Terms—\$3 per annum in advance. The first four numbers having been reprinted, complete sets can be had at the original subscription price.